

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Plains Health Centre.

Prayers

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the city of Regina.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again on behalf of concerned citizens with respect to the closure of the Plains Health Centre. And the prayer reads, Mr. Speaker:

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions of names of people from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

And the names are primarily from the citizens of the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

People that signed this petition are from Regina and from Gainsborough.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads, Mr. Speaker:

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions of names from people in Saskatchewan regarding the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider the closure of the Plains Health Centre.

And the signatures are mainly from Regina, some from Saskatoon, and some from Allan, Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by concerned citizens of Regina.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present petitions of names from throughout Saskatchewan regarding the closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition for the undersigned people of Saskatchewan:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina and Regina South. I so present.

And the people that have signed the petition are from Gainsborough, they're from Carnduff, they're from Estevan, Kelvington, and from the city of Regina. I'd like to present this to the legislature. Thank you.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise to present petitions from Saskatchewan residents regarding the closure of the Plains Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on day no. 37, the 37th day I've stood with my colleagues and the people of Saskatchewan in trying to save the Plains Health Centre. And the prayer of the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre.

The people that have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from the city of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, I see a number of the people that have signed this petition are from the Hodgeville area, but mainly from Regina, in fact many from Regina Victoria and Regina Elphinstone, Regina Northeast and Regina Dewdney, and of course, as always, Regina Albert South constituencies. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the impending closure of the Plains Health Centre. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions to present today that were given to me on Friday at Vibank:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to reconsider closure of the

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to unequivocally pass the Bill to protect the rights of firearms owners, otherwise known by the short title as The Saskatchewan Property Rights Act.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions come from the Vibank, Regina, Glenavon, Windthorst, Davin, Montmartre, Francis, again from the south-east corner of the province, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to reconsider closure of the Plains Health Centre ; and

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to challenge the implementation of the federal firearms legislation.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Friday next ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture regarding the extension of the minister's current trade mission to the Pacific Rim: (1) state the reasons for the extension and the business undertaken during that period; (2) state the total additional cost of the trade mission incurred as a result of the extension.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Friday next ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Agriculture regarding rural service centres, ag service centres: (1) how many enquiries in total did rural service centres receive in 1995; (2) how many enquiries did each rural service centre receive individually in 1995; (3) how many enquiries were received in 1995 by centres that the government proposes to close; (4) what is the furthest distance a producer in rural Saskatchewan will have to travel in order to reach the nearest rural service centre once the closures take place; and (5) is there a formula and/or distance cap that has been developed by the department regarding the amount of travel producers must undertake to reach these centres?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege for me today to introduce to you and to members of this Assembly, 48 young boys and girls who are in grades 5 to 7 from St. Matthew School in Saskatoon. And accompanying

them today is Elizabeth Kreiser, Michelle Sanche, and Carmen Bassingthwaite.

I met with these young people, I think one or two months ago, to talk about how government works and how the political system works in the province of Saskatchewan. And they were so interested and asked such astute questions, I'm sure we'll have a wonderful time when we get together a little later today.

I would very much appreciate it if everyone would join with me in giving them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, it is my real pleasure to be welcoming to the Assembly today in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, 14 public servants, men and women who work in the departments of Finance, Agriculture, Justice, and Social Services, Mr. Speaker.

They are here on a public service tour to both tour the facilities and the rooms in this building, but also to explore with others who work in this building, the processes of government within this building, Mr. Speaker.

These are men and women who serve the people of Saskatchewan on the front lines, Mr. Speaker. And to them we owe our gratitude and our support, and I welcome these very valuable members of the Government of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the Assembly, I would like to introduce 19 grade 8 from the Carnduff School. They're seated in your gallery. Their teachers include Art Keating and Brian Nicholls, along with Mr. and Mrs. Logue as chaperons.

I would ask everyone to welcome them here today, and I look forward to meeting with them after question period.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, some guests seated in your gallery. They have joined us here today to watch question period and of course the second reading of the engineering and geoscientists Act.

I will ask them to stand and I would ask that we hold our applause until they're all introduced. Joining us today from the Association of Professional Engineers of Saskatchewan are Margaret Miller, president; Dennis Paddock, executive director; Bob Barschel, director of professional practice; Ray Pentland, past president.

Joining us today as well, are members of the geoscience professional registration committee: Fran Haidel, Phil Reeves, and Gary Delaney. And also with us today are representatives of the Saskatchewan association of technicians and

technologists: Jamie Britz, executive director; Jim Brent, past president; and Dan Crites, past president.

Please join with me in welcoming our friends here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the legislature, someone seated in your gallery today. Mr. Quinn Bokitch is a grade 12 student from Thom Collegiate who is here today to research a project for his history class.

He's here to learn more about the responsibilities of MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and to answer that age-old question of why anyone would actually choose to go into politics. And in order to give him a little more insight into that, he's going to be watching the House today and I'll ask him a few questions after about his opinions on the proceedings.

So if you want good marks from Quinn, you better be on your best behaviour today. Do you want to . . . we recognize Quinn.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and members of the Assembly today seated in the west gallery, Mr. Ken Schneider. He is a business consultant from the city of Yorkton and a constituent of mine, and he's here to observe the proceedings in the House this afternoon.

And I wish to ask all members of the House to join with me in welcoming Mr. Schneider, if he would please stand.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce somebody very special to the House today — somebody that wasn't here 21 years ago today. It's one of our pages, Leanna Eaton.

An Hon. Member: — Happy Birthday.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the hon. member from Souris Cannington to welcome the students, parents, and teachers from Carnduff.

Carnduff is my home town. You won't know that because I left a number of years ago, but it's my home town and my parents still live there. And I've always been very proud to have come from Carnduff and like to visit when I go back there. And I came here in grade 8 like you did, and someday hopefully one of you will be sitting in this chair.

Anyway all the best to you. Have an enjoyable day in Regina and have a safe trip home, and say hi to everybody back there.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Secretaries Week

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week is Secretaries Week and today is officially designated Secretaries Day. I know that because this morning there was a reminder on my desk that I was making this statement, along with my schedule, briefing books and phone messages. It helps to start the day organized, and I have help, as we all do.

Those of us who are lucky enough to have support staff know that if we look good, if we appear to be performing our duties with a flair of intelligence and efficiency, then that success is at least due to our secretaries giving us the right information and pointing us in the proper direction.

As the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood said last year, when things go well, they stand aside and allow us to take the credit that is actually half theirs. And when things go badly, they do not say, I told you so.

Mr. Speaker, our secretaries and constituency assistants work year round with us in what is truly a partnership. If we do not acknowledge their value to our work often enough, it is not because we do not recognize it. So as chair of our caucus, speaking on behalf of all of our members, let me say that we do know. We do appreciate, and we do value our co-workers, our secretaries. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I too rise on behalf of the official opposition to recognize today's designation as Secretaries Day. We all know that secretaries are often the most important people in any organization. They try to keep us running on schedule and our correspondence up to date.

The Liberal caucus is fortunate to have two excellent secretaries, and my colleagues and I would like to express our gratitude to them for their continued hard work and patience, and extend the best wishes to all secretaries across the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I also rise today on behalf of our PC (Progressive Conservative) caucus to acknowledge the hardworking secretaries of our province. I don't know about others in this Assembly, but our office secretaries, Joanne and Mavis, are a whole lot like Radar O'Reilly from *MASH*; they bring us our work before we're even ready to look for it.

I want to thank them both for their dedication and for the many evenings and weekends they've given up to catch up on work that needed to be done. Thanks as well to all other secretaries who efficiently carry out their duties behind the scenes and often don't receive the recognition they deserve.

And while I'm on my feet, I'd also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the highest paid secretary in the province, the

Provincial Secretary. In fact the Provincial Secretary is one of the few secretaries who got a big raise this year — \$4,000 to be exact. As I mentioned earlier, all good secretaries are able to carry out a wide variety of different jobs. Our Provincial Secretary is no exception. In addition to his demanding duties of looking after the provincial seal, he finds time to sell a few perogies as well. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Humboldt SADD Chapter

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Humboldt SADD (Students Against Drinking and Driving) chapter and its president, Jeremy Elder. The Humboldt chapter was awarded the Nicole Nakoneshny Memorial Award given to the most active SADD chapter. Nationally Humboldt was presented with the National Cooperation Award for their work with other agencies in schools, communities, and provinces.

President Jeremy Elder received three major awards: the Royal Bank Youth Leadership Provincial and National Award and the Sarah Dunleavy Memorial Scholarship presented to an individual who has shown outstanding dedication to the goals of SADD. Mr. Elder is a two-time provincial winner of the Provincial Royal Bank Leadership Award and the only Saskatchewan delegate to win a national award. Congratulations to Jeremy Elder and the Humboldt SADD chapter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tribute to Spouses of Members

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to speak about a group that often goes without public recognition but without whom this legislature simply could not function. I am speaking about the spouses of the members of this Assembly.

Our wives and husbands are people who play a huge role in enabling us to do our jobs as legislators. These are hard-working partners who keep the home fires burning; they are the ones who take phone calls from constituents at all hours of the day or night — our personal secretaries. They fill the role of single parent all too often. They shovel snow and mow the lawn in our absence — this year more snow than mowing, I think. Without the support of our spouses, Mr. Speaker, our job as legislators would be impossible.

Today has special significance for me, Mr. Speaker, because it is my 25th wedding anniversary, and it is because of the understanding of my wife, Sylvia, that I am able to do my work as an MLA in this government.

I am sure that all members of this House will join with me today in saluting the untold work of our spouses.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Waterhen Lake Housing Initiative

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I wish to also commend the first nations of the Waterhen Lake area for attempting to solve some of their housing problems while at the same time stimulating economic activity in northern Saskatchewan.

The Waterhen Lake First Nation recently purchased a saw mill and plans to use it to launch a log cabin business. It hopes to build log cabins to help ease the desperate housing shortage facing that community. About 100 families currently are on the waiting-list, and many of those families on the waiting-list consist of young people who also have young children.

We, as the Liberal opposition, hope that this government will also look at ways to encourage northern communities to build their own houses. If communities such as Waterhen Lake choose to build log cabins, every effort must be made to ensure that they have access to high quality materials and equipment.

The severe housing shortage of about 600 units in northern Saskatchewan demands that we find alternative ways to provide proper housing. The current overcrowding is causing health problems and family breakdown. A shortage of housing is also an economic disincentive and other challenges for people living in northern Saskatchewan. This crisis in housing demands a unique and creative solution.

I'd like to commend the Waterhen Lake First Nations on their efforts to create jobs while at the same time relieving some of the tremendous pressure on current housing needs. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

North-west Trade Fair

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend marks the sixth annual North-west Trade Fair to be held in Meadow Lake. The trade fair is sponsored by the Meadow Lake Winter Festival, and there will be something for everyone: more than 90 indoor and outdoor exhibits ranging from household and commercial items to forestry and agriculture.

And many of the exhibitors are from the Meadow Lake area. But there also, Mr. Speaker, will be some from across the prairie provinces, and one in fact even from Ontario. There will be forestry equipment on display. Mistik Management will have an exhibit again this year, as will the Millar Western pulp mill.

Agriculture is also very important, as you will know, to the Meadow Lake economy. The North of 40 Cattle Breeders will have a show and competition which includes the futurity heifer competition, an open class showmanship competition. And this year there will be an outdoor tent which will be the focus for many more activities. There will be a locally organized petting zoo that will probably be a big hit for the kids this year.

In short, Mr. Speaker, something for everybody. It's shaping up to be a great weekend and a great annual event in Meadow Lake. Everyone is welcome. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskferco Expansion

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and congratulate Saskferco fertilizer plant on the announcement of their \$37 million expansion.

Saskferco was a great idea from the start, although the Premier and his colleagues didn't seem to think so at the time. Instead they had nothing but contempt for the Saskferco plant when it was first announced.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the member who is now the Economic Development minister called Saskferco a sweetheart deal. And the Premier said much, much more. He said, and I quote: "We've got a white elephant on our hands." He also said, "The fertilizer plant should be stopped." That was on February 20, 1991.

He later said that the NDP (New Democratic Party) were, "opposed to the Saskferco fertilizer plant." Well it's good to see that the members opposite have completed their about-face on this particular issue, and now if we could accomplish the same thing in a number of other areas, perhaps Saskatchewan's economy would indeed have a chance.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Women in Agriculture

Ms. Murrell: — On Secretaries Day it is worth pointing out that not all secretaries are women, which gives me the opportunity to say that, likewise, not all farmers are men. We no longer talk about the farmer and the farmer's wife any more than we refer to actors and actresses. People act and people farm.

In recognition of this fact, I'm happy to commend the Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food Library for establishing a research collection on the achievements of Saskatchewan farm women — a collection that will become a valuable tool for the scholar and for the interested general reader.

The collection began as the result of the 1991 census of agriculture, which, with extended reporting, allowed for specific recognition that there are, quote "farms owned and operated by females."

This recognition has led to the library's attempt to collect in one spot records that have till now been scattered or sparse. Head librarian Helene Stewart and her staff are attempting to build their collection and ask for contributions from the public — journals, books, conference proceedings, whatever.

Mr. Speaker, because we are not yet 100 years old as a province, we tend to be a bit casual in the preservation of our historical record. I am happy to see this collection of the achievements of Saskatchewan farm women. It is a good start

on a neglected chapter of our historical book. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Gross Revenue Insurance Program Overpayments

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I questioned the Acting Minister of Agriculture in this House yesterday about the fact that his government is backing farmers into a corner by demanding payment of the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) wind-up. By breaking its promise, the government is encouraging farmers to pursue legal action.

Mr. Speaker, an ad in today's paper, in the Regina *Leader-Post*, invites farmers to join a possible court challenge against the government. Will the Acting Minister of Agriculture stand in this House and demonstrate some courage by doing what this government should have done in the first place — return the \$188 million that was taken from the GRIP surplus and return it to the producers of this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite keeps referring this to a bill, when actually it is a request to the farmers to return the overpayment in 1993. Some of the reason the farmers are not sending this request to government, Mr. Speaker, is because of the member opposite creating confusion.

He speaks of the \$188 million that was the province's share of when the GRIP ended. I want to inform the member that the great percentage of that was put back into agricultural programs, unlike his counterparts in Ottawa who took most of it back into their general revenue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because this government broke its promise and is now demanding the payment on GRIP wind-up statements, farmers feel they must examine legal recourse as an alternative to hold the government to its word.

While this government demonstrates no regard for the farmers of this province, the mayor of Calgary recently stated, and I quote, "Agriculture is growing more than food. It's growing Calgary." The mayor of Calgary realizes the importance of farmers and the farm economy, yet this government shows utter contempt for the farmers of this province by breaking promises time after time after time.

Will the acting minister demonstrate his commitment to agriculture in Saskatchewan and make good on this government's promise?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well the Minister of Agriculture of course is away on a trade mission right now and it's probably a good thing. I'm sure he would be quite tired of the same questions coming day after day after day.

But I want to tell the member opposite that there were 39,000 producers that received their share of the GRIP overpayment. Does the member opposite want us to request that those 39,000 farmers send back their cheques so that we can, in turn, give some money to the people that already received an overpayment in 1993? I think that's what he's suggesting.

And I want — he talks about Alberta — I want to tell the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, that in Saskatchewan we spend more than \$400 per capita in agricultural programs, unlike Alberta who spent under \$200 per capita for their agricultural programs.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crop Insurance Office Closures

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I recently came into possession of the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union newsletter for the month of April. I would like to send a copy over to the Acting Minister of Agriculture.

This newsletter indicates that when a number of Crop Insurance offices were recently closed, 46 in-scope or union positions were eliminated, resulting in 43 people losing their jobs. This publication also indicates that eighteen and a half out-of-scope or management positions were eliminated, but only one person lost a job in the process.

Can the minister explain why 43 front-line service people lost their jobs and only one management person?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Mr. Speaker, this government listened to the people of Saskatchewan in an extensive consultation process before this budget. What they said is, because of the federal reductions to the province in health and in social programs and in education, that we should look internally to back-fill those programs so that we will not lose them. We looked throughout every department to see what internal efficiencies we could. Certainly in Crop Insurance there was some adjustments made, saving the people of Saskatchewan some \$5 million, Mr. Speaker.

Now I remember the members opposite campaigning in the last election about internal efficiencies. Now the only reason they don't remember, Mr. Speaker, is because I think that was one of the sections of their red book that they whited out.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, people in rural Saskatchewan are awful tired of seeing front-line people losing their jobs and all of your management people being protected in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, the union alleges, in this newsletter, that the reason eighteen and half out-of-scope positions were eliminated and only person lost a job is because a number of positions were created, and I quote: "to make the government and management look good by cutting these phantom management jobs."

Will the minister explain how many other phantom management positions this government is pretending to cut in other departments while front-line people are losing their jobs?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — I want to tell the member opposite that the Crop Insurance offices were closed in Wilkie, Wolseley, Kyle, Wynyard, Carnduff, Outlook, Melfort, and Canora. Now I know the member is concerned about Melfort, but not concerned about the financial well-being of the province.

The total job loss, Mr. Speaker, were 33 positions in Melville — 29 full-time, 4 part-time; 27 customer service office positions; 154 marketing agents, Mr. Speaker. And why? Because farmers said that they could do it on their own and that that \$5 million in savings would be better put to programs.

The members opposite seem to forget that internal efficiency is necessary because of the federal cuts in their last budget. And we will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker, to give the people of this province adequate service within what we can afford.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

High-risk Offender Identification

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government claims to have the best interests of Saskatchewan children at heart. But time and time again, the Minister of Justice stands up in this House to give more excuses for not immediately making legislative changes to prevent Saskatchewan from becoming a haven for pedophiles.

In a media interview yesterday, the minister stated that police are targeting child prostitution, and more specifically the johns, by making sure the names and faces of individuals are circulated publicly.

Mr. Speaker, if police are circulating the names and faces of convicted customers of child prostitutes, why won't this government immediately start doing the same for convicted pedophiles who are seeking refuge in Saskatchewan communities?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question. We are working very carefully with the city police in Saskatoon, the city police in Regina, the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), Justice officials, Social Services officials, to prepare a Saskatchewan way of dealing with the problem that the member opposite has raised.

And we are going to do that in a way which protects the

children in our community, but it also deals with the issues of privacy and concern of some of these offenders. We're going to do it in a fair, straightforward way, in the Saskatchewan way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, it seems that in fact the government is actually defending its double standard for child protection. I have already proposed Bill 56 — An Act to Protect the Public from Convicted Pedophiles. It's time to quit stalling. We will never know how many children are being put at risk while this government puts off dealing with the threat of released convicted pedophiles.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Justice take immediate action on this issue by supporting our proposed legislation to protect the public from convicted pedophiles?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his second question. We have been working carefully with the communities and the people that are involved in this. And I have a quote from Chief Owen Maguire in Saskatoon who we've been working with, and he says that . . . this is on April 11:

I think we're on a good track here. I would sooner have . . . (protocol) that we're going to be able to live with rather than have to do patchwork. Saskatchewan has an opportunity here (to do it in a positive way).

He confirms that our three-month time line is right in line and that we need to do this in an organized, concerned fashion.

I met with Mr. Allan Rock last week. We're looking at some of the things that are being done on a federal basis. We need to do this in a coordinated fashion with other provinces. This will be a subject for discussion at the ministers of Justice meeting in May in about two or three weeks time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Nuclear Industry Development

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Premier. Mr. Premier, your foot-dragging on nuclear development has cost our province a tremendous economic opportunity and possibly hundreds of jobs.

On April 30, AECL (Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd.) is scheduled to announce a major restructuring, and speculation is that it will result in a major downsizing and possibly even closure of the Saskatoon AECL office, an office which employs 110 people in high-paying, high-tech jobs.

While your NDP government has resisted nuclear development, Manitoba has taken a proactive approach. As a result, AECL is going to continue funding the Whiteshell electron accelerator project in that province while Saskatchewan gets the short end

of the stick once again.

Mr. Premier, why have you squandered this opportunity? Why must Saskatchewan residents sit back and watch economic opportunities in high-paying, high-tech jobs leaving our province once again?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Conservative Party of course is today, for a change, in the mode of defending virtually everything that the former Devine administration conducted and did in the province of Saskatchewan.

That's a refreshing change because, as we know, the Leader of the Third Party has been heretofore, since becoming the Leader of the Third Party, rejecting and denying everything that the Devine administration has embarked upon.

This is another one of these hangover issues which the member alludes to and tries to concoct a case which is not based in conformance to the facts. The situation is that the province of Saskatchewan is in active negotiations with the appropriate AECL people to determine whether or not and how we can continue to have a significant presence of the research and the development respecting AECL's activities in the city of Saskatoon.

The key issue here is whether or not the federal Liberal government is going to continue the funding of AECL. They have to make a major decision in this regard, and we are working very hard to work the best possible deal for the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. The assumptions behind the question are premature if not erroneous at this point.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Premier, you say that there are active negotiations going on. Well that may be the case. In 1994 you gave a Saskatchewan . . . pardon me, a Saskatoon consulting company, Garven & Associates, \$95,000 to conduct a feasibility study on building an electron accelerator here in Saskatchewan.

Well we're still waiting for the results of that study. Meanwhile Manitoba has beaten us to the punch. And if the accelerator is built anywhere, it will almost certainly wind up in Manitoba. In fact Manitoba will probably wind up using the \$95,000 study you paid for to help them with their project.

Mr. Premier, this type of facility can be used to process and preserve food products and sterilize medical supplies. That's exactly the kind of value added processing that we need to promote here in Saskatchewan, instead of seeing it slip away to Manitoba.

Mr. Premier, whatever became of the Garven study? Why have you taken so long to look at the opportunity and the high-tech jobs that go along with it that now appear to be gone for ever?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite, of course, and I are onside to this extent. We believe

very much in diversification and value added development as the economy. It's too bad that that's not what he and his party believed in when they were in office for nine years. And the consequence, we find ourselves with a total debt of about 14 to \$15 billion as they spent money like drunken sailors.

We think that economic development is not megaprojects. We think economic development in Saskatchewan involves the private sector, the public sector, the cooperative sector, and it means value added as the hon. member has indicated, whether it's in the nuclear research and development industry or in other areas.

But what we're not going to do, Mr. Speaker, because we can't afford to do it, we're not going to open up the pocketbooks and get the province back further into the sink-hole of debt that the Conservatives have gotten this province into. We want reasoned studies, which will take time, in order to do research and development, value added and diversification; and when they land in the province of Saskatchewan they're going to be here to stay and to provide good paying jobs for a long time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Occupational Health and Safety Changes

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question today, Mr. Speaker, is to the Minister of Labour. Mr. Minister, three years ago you introduced changes to The Occupational Health and Safety Act and several months ago a consultant you hired told you that your proposed regulations would cost business communities in Saskatchewan eighteen and a half million dollars to implement.

At the time you said it was too soon to say how much changes to The Occupational Health and Safety Act regulations would cost businesses, but you were sure that the KPMG report was wrong. Well, Mr. Minister, you said the same thing about the business community's concerns over The Workers' Compensation Act, and you were once again proven to be wrong there.

So now I suspect you're waiting until we're out of the session and people are on their summer holidays so that you can conveniently release your occupational health and safety regulations, because you will know of course that these regulations will be costly and you will want to avoid the scrutiny of this Assembly.

So, Mr. Minister, you've had three years to prepare these regulations . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The hon. member has been fairly lengthy in his preamble and I'll ask him to put his question.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My direct question to the minister is this. Mr. Minister, you've had three years to prepare these regulations. When are you going to release them, and would you commit today to releasing them while the legislature is still in session?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well I appreciate the question. It is an important issue, one of occupational health and safety. The regulations were almost ready to take forward when the report came out from KPMG, that they felt there could be as high as an \$18 million price tag attached to the implementation of the regulations.

We wanted to look at ways in which we could implement the occupational health and safety regulations without compromising their value for safer work places, and at the same time not having that much cost to the employers who would have to suffer that cost.

We think we've been successful in a number of areas that we've looked, in terms of in particular having the training of occupational health and safety committees, a number of proactive initiatives, some regulatory measures I think employers will be happy with.

And while I cannot commit to making sure that the regulations are brought forward during the term of the session, I'm certainly going to be doing my best to bring them in in the very near future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I have a supplemental question for the Minister of Labour. Mr. Minister, everybody wants the workplace to be safe. Everybody wants that place to be safe — the employers and the employees alike. The problem is, Mr. Minister, your own report states that your changes will place a significant burden on small businesses, and that they won't necessarily improve the workplace safety, and you've admitted the cost yourself in your statement.

On one hand the Minister of Economic Development is promising cuts in regulations for businesses, and on the other hand you are adding red tape to running a business in Saskatchewan. It's not consistent. What's worse, Mr. Minister, is that your proposed regulations won't even improve the safety of workers.

Mr. Minister, after three years it's hard to believe that you haven't been able to address the concerns outlined in your report and the concerns of the business community. Now, have you done so, Mr. Minister? Have you been able to address these concerns? And when can we and the business community examine those regulations?

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Well the regulations themselves have not changed in any substantive degree. It's the implementation of the regulations that we've been looking at, to try and keep the costs reasonable.

I want to stress to the member opposite and to the Assembly that the occupational health and safety regulations had fairly broad consensus on almost every issue from the labour community as well as the business community. It's the cost that concerned us. It was a report done by KPMG. I also point out it was an interim report.

And we took the interim report, looked at the concerns that were raised. I've had the officials in the department doing some consulting, both with business and labour. We've looked at some very innovative ways of implementing the recommendations that I think will be of benefit to the employer and also to the employees in having safer workplaces.

And we are giving due diligence, and in the very near future the regulations will be in place. And I think that there will be general acceptance by the business community and having safer workplaces for the working men and women of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Treatment of Welfare Recipients

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it has become very apparent, since 1991, that this government speaks a great deal about compassion, but its actions don't reflect those words.

And today we have another example involving Debbie Morris of Saskatoon, a cancer victim who is preparing to undergo surgery on Monday. As if she doesn't have enough to worry about, Ms. Morris was recently cut off of welfare because she was attempting to make extra money to provide for her four children. As a result, this family has had to survive solely on family allowance. In addition, Ms. Morris has just received notice that her phone, power, gas, and water are going to be disconnected.

Mr. Speaker, Debbie Morris has enough to worry about. She does not need the added burden created because this NDP government lacks in compassion. What is the Minister of Social Services prepared to do to ensure that people like Ms. Morris are shown the compassion and the treatment with dignity that they so deserve?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Humboldt raises, in the House today, a very significant concern on behalf of an individual. Following question period, she and other members can rest assured that I and the Department of Social Services will be following up on the information that she has laid before the House.

But, Mr. Speaker, I ask that member again in public, as I have asked her in private on a number of occasions, if she is aware of individuals in our province who are in need, to please contact the department, contact my office. Do not just simply do it in a question period to endeavour to convince people of your own compassion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, there are numerous problems. I don't think we should have to be contacting the minister constantly; he should be doing something.

Mr. Speaker, the problems that Debbie Morris has had with government agencies is only one example of the lack of compassion that she and others like her experience on a daily

basis. A great deal of the problem rests with the fact that this government is so money driven that it forgets that with every decision lives are affected.

Will the minister explain how many people like Debbie Morris have to speak out before this NDP government rethinks its policies of economics over the well-being and compassion of our sick and elderly?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm doing my level best to remain calm in light of that kind of question from that political party. I repeat again that individual concerns, I appreciate being brought to my attention, as does the Department of Social Services. What is not appreciated I know, by individuals or by the community, is grandstanding or this kind of politics, Mr. Speaker.

Now when that member from Humboldt, who in this House on occasion has attacked valuable civil servants and not apologized, when yesterday we had that caucus attacking civil servants, when today she implies that people are not doing their work, Mr. Speaker, it is shameful. And what is doubly shameful, what is doubly shameful, is the silence, Mr. Speaker, of that Liberal caucus in light of a federal Liberal government slashing social programs from coast to coast, border to border in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel Strike

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the impact of the SaskTel strike on management employees and the general public has been well documented by the media in this House. Reports that both sides in the dispute are heading back to the bargaining table is a positive sign.

Mr. Speaker, it has come to my attention that many young people are awaiting to begin summer employment with the Crown corporation. Mr. Speaker, as members know, many students have or will soon wind up their schooling for the year and need summer's work.

Will the minister in charge of SaskTel in this House tell us how many young people are awaiting work with the Crown company, and whether their summer employment will be affected by this strike should it continue on?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is true that the contracts for summer employment that are normally entered into at approximately this time of year with the students who have summer jobs at SaskTel contain a clause which says that in the event of a labour disruption, that summer students will not be hired for the duration of that period.

So it is true that an unfortunate effect of the current labour situation is that summer students will not be taking their place in those jobs until the impasse has been successfully resolved.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, before we proceed to ministerial statements, I would ask for leave of the members to introduce some guests.

The Speaker: — I will recognize the hon. member just before orders of the day and I expect to be there very shortly. I will acknowledge the hon. member before orders of the day.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Announcement of Saskferco Expansion

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring some good economic news to the attention of all members of the Assembly. This morning the Premier and I had the pleasure of taking part in the announcement of a \$37 million expansion of Saskferco's urea operation.

This expansion is good news in more ways than one. It will create about 100 construction jobs and provide spin-off benefits to firms that supply services to the plant. It will also provide a greater return to Saskatchewan taxpayers on their investment in Saskferco.

Last year, the plant paid a dividend of \$7.2 million to the province. With the expansion we expect profits and subsequent dividends to be even higher. Mr. Speaker, Saskferco has proven to be a safe investment for the province. The plant was initially funded by an equity commitment of \$69.9 million by Cargill, \$68.4 million by the province, and \$1.4 million by Citibank. As well, the government currently guarantees debt of \$214.6 million U.S. (United States).

In its first three years of operation, Saskferco has paid \$16.4 million U.S. and \$38 million Canadian against debt guaranteed by the province. I am pleased that the new expansion will be financed from Saskferco's cash flow and that the partners are not required to make any further investment.

In closing, I want to emphasize that this expansion is a win-win situation for the government, the company, the shareholders, and most importantly, for the people of this province. With 140 people on its permanent payroll and another 40 employed on a contract basis, Saskferco continues to make an important contribution to jobs, agriculture, and economic growth in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin by thanking the minister for having the statement in a timely fashion. We appreciate that and hope that all other ministers will take note.

Mr. Speaker, whenever there is economic news of this sort in the province of course our caucus is always supportive, and it's just good for the province. It's good for everyone involved and

we commend Cargill . . . or Saferco for in fact these expansions.

One thing that I might add for the minister is that in fact some of the profits that he's referring to that the Saskatchewan government enjoys, should be perhaps redirected to those that are directly related to this industry, and that being the farmers of this province.

When we have profits related to the fertilizer industry why wouldn't the government directly send this money back in some form or fashion to the farmers of this province who are purchasing this fertilizer, Mr. Speaker? And I hope this is something they'll consider in the very near future. Thanks.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While we are pleased to see the Premier and his colleagues now in support of this project, when it was under construction the Premier and his colleagues ran around this province like Chicken Little saying that the sky was going to fall in. And the project now has been shown to be successful. It was a good investment. It returned jobs, economic diversification and development here in the province. It was, in the minister's own words, a good, safe investment. And it's nice to see that they finally recognize that.

And I've just to remind you of a few of the comments . . . just remind you of a few of the comments that you and your colleagues made at the time: "We've got a white elephant on our hands"; that was the Premier. "The \$340 million Cargill fertilizer plant should be stopped"; that was another comment of the Premier at the time. And another quote: "Romanow is opposed to Saferco fertilizer plant." A quote again: "Romanow's NDP says the Saferco plant under construction is not an issue."

Mr. Speaker, it's finally come home to roost on the NDP, the good socialists that they are, that there are times when there is an opportunity to make investments, and that was indeed one of the great investments that this province enjoys.

We have to, Mr. Speaker, it goes I guess without . . . certainly without saying that the management and staff of Cargill and Saferco deserve a great deal of credit in terms of the project and the project's successful nature, that it is out there. And we fully believe that it was a good project for the people of Saskatchewan and has resulted in tremendous opportunities for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I have a ministerial statement.

The Speaker: — Before we proceed to . . . Order, order. Before we proceed to . . . Order. Before we proceed to ministerial statements, I have previously denied the hon. member for Regina Victoria leave to introduce guests on some understandings regarding orderly operation of the House, and I wasn't anticipating the ministerial statement.

I would like to, with the permission of the members, to return

back to the hon. member for Victoria's request for leave. Would that be granted?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank the members of the House for their kindness.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members, a group of 30 students. They're all adults. They are enrolled at the University of Regina in the English as a second language program. They're accompanied here today by their instructors, Ruth Heinrichs, Ron Evans, and Rob McDonnell.

Now many, if not all, of these students will have come here from other countries to learn English, and in addition to whatever other impression we may leave them with, let us leave them a warm and profound impression of welcome and friendship. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Toth: — With leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I note that we have a very important guest with us who happens to be sitting behind the bar on the government side of the House, Mr. Ken Kluz, who is a former member of this Assembly.

Unfortunately, it appears it ran up against a roadblock in the nomination and I believe the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood is now the member from that area. But we certainly want to recognize the efforts he has given to us in the past and welcome him back to this Assembly. Welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Sale of Cameco Shares

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to advise the Assembly of a matter of considerable positive public interest.

Members of the Assembly will know that when this government announced its intention to sell nine and a half million of its shares in Cameco Corporation, it also announced that a further 1 million shares would be available through options for sale for another period of 30 days. I'm pleased to announce today that at the closing of the option period, an additional 620,500 shares were sold under the option.

Despite the current market price, which is slightly below the

original sale price, these additional shares were sold at the original closing price of 75.50 per share. The total amount of shares of Cameco sold by CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) this year is now 10,120,500. The Crown holding company retains 5,423,123 shares in the uranium producing and refining corporation headquartered in Saskatoon. This represents 10.3 per cent of outstanding shares in Cameco.

This sale was a tremendous success because of the work of the officials of the Crown Investments Corporation and the syndicate it put together to market this issue. Cameco has been listed on the New York Stock Exchange since March. It is now only the second Saskatchewan company to be listed on the New York Stock Exchange — both of which have roots as Saskatchewan Crown corporations.

In marketing this issue, Cameco and CIC's brokerage syndicate travelled all across North America and to London, Paris, and Geneva, contributing to the great success of the sale. In the process of introducing investors to Cameco, they also acquainted them with Saskatchewan and the kinds of opportunities available in our province. The professional marketing job done by Cameco and by our syndicate is something worthy of praise from every member of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, CIC officials and board members put a great deal of time and effort into putting together the right syndicate for this sale, and I would say the results speak very clearly for the success of those efforts. I want to make it clear that, as with the funds received from the original sale, the money for the sale of the options shares will be applied directly to debt repayment.

The sale of these options will result in gross proceeds of \$46.85 million to CIC. The total gross proceeds from the sale of Cameco shares is now placed at \$764.1 million. And, Mr. Speaker, estimated total net proceeds, after costs, \$730 million. Of these proceeds, half will be retained by CIC to pay down its debt and half will be paid to the General Revenue Fund in the form of a special dividend — all, as I've already said, to pay down debt.

I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, that CIC's prudent management of the public's investment in Cameco has resulted in this significant return on that investment and, might I add, a return much higher than that which we would have received had we relied on the advice of the members opposite who sit amongst us in this Assembly today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

(1430)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to at this time thank the minister for sending a copy of the ministerial statement over in a timely fashion, as I wish that other ministers would also do.

Of course today's sale, once again at quite a high price, I guess, in comparison to what it was a year ago or two years ago looks great for Saskatchewan. But there are some concerns, Mr.

Speaker, that being that we still hold significant amount of shares, if in fact the sale of shares isn't putting downward pressure on the value of shares. I think there's an opportunity for the government to perhaps move further along in this direction and get out of some of the industry and businesses that they're in today. You know, whether or not they should ever have been into is still a question which needs to be answered.

A few of the concerns that we would have with in fact, you know . . . not rain on his day here, but a few of the concerns we would have still comes in the form of how this division of the monies coming in . . . where half goes to CIC to pay down debt and half goes to the General Revenue Fund. Whenever you have monies going to the General Revenue Fund . . . and this is the only way that we can have of an assurance that in fact it's going towards debt. It opens it up to some gamesmanship.

So at this time, I would ask that the minister, perhaps within cabinet, promote the Bill put forward by the Liberal Finance critic and support this Bill which in fact would tie . . . I don't want to say tie the hands, but it gives ease to directing the sale of assets over and above \$100,000 in value directly to the debt. And we don't have to worry about whether or not there's semantics or some games being played there, so that when in fact you have positive announcements such as this, the public, the opposition, know full well that it's going to go directly to where we are being told, and we don't have to have accountants pore over this to ensure us and to the public that in fact that is the case. Thank you.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are certainly pleased to see the further sale of Cameco shares. As you know, it was originally intended to be sold down over time, and so we are pleased to see that the government is indeed doing that. We have been recommending it, and I'm glad to see that they have accepted that recommendation. The benefit to the province will be significant, Mr. Speaker. We would very much want to see all monies raised going towards debt retirement.

We hope that this means that the government will sort of take the blinders off to other opportunities in this area — perhaps the further share and eventual completion of sales of Cameco altogether. There's others as well. The Wascana Energy, there's approximately \$65 million worth of shares that the government currently holds in Wascana Energy that I think is an opportunity. Perhaps Saferco as well is a great opportunity, given the strong fertilizer market that's out there today, that that's a possibility.

And another possibility perhaps, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, is SaskTel. I can't help but recall the dinner that we attended here not long ago where they had the CEO (chief executive officer) of Hewlett Packard talking about SaskTel and the good job that SaskTel does, yes, and the value that there is. But his concern was that at some point, given new technology coming into place at SaskTel, while it may be worth literally millions, hundreds of millions, perhaps even billions, might not be worth anything in the not-too-distant future.

So we hope through the Crown process, the process of

reviewing Crown corporations, that privatization will be looked at in a very favourable light because there are other opportunities, there are other ways of raising money here in the province to pay down debt.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 61 — An Act respecting the Practices of Professional Engineering and Professional Geoscience and to make consequential amendments to other Acts

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on second reading of The Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act. This Bill is a rewrite of the existing professional engineering legislation in the province.

The current engineering law is out of date. The law reflects the world of professional engineering as it existed many decades ago. The Association of Professional Engineers of Saskatchewan began the process of developing a new Act about eight years ago.

In developing this Act it was decided to add recognition and regulation of professional geoscientists in the new engineering law. Geoscientists carry on work of a similar nature to engineering. We have worked closely with both groups, engineers and geoscientists, in developing this new law. Hon. members are no doubt aware we have received a fair amount of comment from other organizations on this proposed legislation.

A number of groups have expressed the concern that the legislation may result in the new Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan taking steps to restrict the ability of groups such as physicists, computer scientists, information processors, architects, and technologists and technicians, from carrying out their normal duties.

These groups made their concerns known to me shortly after I became minister. As a result of these concerns, it was decided not to bring in any changes to what we call the scope of practice for engineers. We are bringing in a Bill which essentially is a necessary housekeeping Bill. This Bill updates the current law in a number of routine areas which are not controversial. I will indicate these now, and can deal with them further in committee.

The Bill provides for greater public accountability by authorizing the government to appoint two members to the council of the new professional association. The Bill updates public accountability in cases of professional misconduct or professional incompetence and updates fine levels for these cases.

This Bill is the first step in a two-step process. Because of the concerns of the groups I have already mentioned, I have

decided to start consultation with these groups as soon as possible. I will be inviting groups interested in a new scope of practice for engineers and geoscientists to join with my officials in discussing a new scope of practice. I firmly believe we need a new scope of practice.

A new scope of practice clause must reflect the public interest and the reality of today's world of work. Hopefully it will be achieved by a consensus of all interested parties. Members may know I have received an indication from groups such as physicists, computer scientists, and architects that they can accept this first step, provided we move quickly to resolve their concerns over any new scope of practice. It is incumbent upon us to do this as soon as possible. I assure the House we will work diligently to achieve a consensus on the new scope of practice.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words about people employed as technicians and technologists. I understand and appreciate the strong representations from their organization in the past few weeks. I acknowledge their desire to be specifically identified as a group who are excluded from the Act's provisions. The draft Bill does exclude them as a group who are practising his or her profession, trade, or calling. This exclusion continues the provision in the current law.

As I said, this draft Bill provides for us to appoint two members to the council of the new association. I intend to recommend we appoint a technician or technologist to the council. I will be asking the Saskatchewan Applied Technologists and Technicians to suggest names for my consideration.

I wish to discuss the intent of the new law. The Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act does not restrict people from doing their jobs. The Bill only regulates the practice of professional engineering and professional geoscience by members of the new association. The only prohibition is against others holding themselves out as professional engineers or professional geoscientists. Only members of the new association may put themselves forward as professional engineers or professional geoscientists. The Bill does not prevent people from doing their jobs in any way. The specific exclusion clause clarifies this intent.

The new Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act will update an important law for engineers and geoscientists in this province. Our plan to develop a consensus on a new scope of practice for stage 2 demonstrates our commitment to reaching a mutually satisfactory solution for engineers and geoscientists, technologists and technicians, and other groups.

By working on this project in a cooperative spirit we can develop a better law for us all. I will be pleased to answer any questions members may have in committee. I move second reading of The Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to take a few moments to discuss The Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act that is before us today.

I firstly would like to note that in my reading of the Act I see that it's a very important thing that there's been no provision made anywhere in this Act for including welders under the definition of the professional engineers.

Mr. Speaker, an Act regulating the engineering and geoscientific profession is long overdue. The current legislation that governs these professions is outdated and the Association of Professional Engineers of Saskatchewan has been working towards this new Act for many years.

As the fields of engineering and geoscience progress and modernize on a global scale, legislation that regulates these professions needs to be modified and changed as well. Through talks and consultations with the Association of Professional Engineers of Saskatchewan, it has been made clear that this association is pleased to see that Bill 77, An Act respecting the Practices of Professional Engineering and Professional Geoscience has been introduced in the House during this legislative session.

A lot of time and hard work has gone into the formulation of this Bill on the part of many organizations that will be regulated by this pending piece of legislation. Upon the passage of this Bill into law, the Association of Professional Engineers of Saskatchewan will be known as the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see this government take notice of the importance that technical professions have for the economic well-being and growth of this province.

This Bill not only recognizes the importance of these types of jobs and careers, but it hopefully opens this government's eyes to the need to work to keep and to recruit as many technological jobs in Saskatchewan as possible.

(1445)

The future of this province depends not only on the continuing prosperity of the agricultural sectors of rural Saskatchewan, but it also depends on the fostering of growth in the oil and gas, mining, and forestry industries in this province. We would all like to see continued growth in these sectors of our economy as they do foster job creation and economic growth in the areas of the province that need it most, that is northern and rural Saskatchewan.

The University of Saskatchewan has one of the finest engineering programs in western Canada; giving public support to engineering and geoscientific professions will hopefully help foster a growing interest in this field of studies in our province's universities.

Currently, a large number of engineers that graduate from our universities' engineering and geoscience programs leave the province to find employment elsewhere. Mr. Speaker, we must work together to bolster the engineering and geoscience fields in our province in order to keep our young people here. By doing so, we will not only continue to increase our tax base, but industries that depend on engineers and geoscientists for much

of the work that needs to be done will be able to find qualified, quality people living and working here in Saskatchewan.

The main purpose of this new legislation, as I understand it, Mr. Speaker, is to include geoscientists into the recognition and regulations that govern engineers in this province. Due to the similarity of work that is done by many types of engineers and geoscientists, it only makes sense that they be ruled by the same piece of legislation.

This bill does not simply include the geoscience title, it reflects consensus among the engineering and geoscience communities with regards to disciplinary provisions and penalties that may arise out of disciplinary action. The stakeholders that we have consulted see no problem with stiffer penalties in cases of professional or criminal misconduct.

The council under this new legislation will consist of elected and appointed councillors from both fields and shall govern the affairs of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan. The council must consist of at least ten councillors. Of the councillors that are elected, not less than two are to be professional geoscientists and not less than four are to be professional engineers.

I do question, why there is a difference in the required numbers of elected professionals from each field sitting on the council. This concern will be raised in more detail in the Committee of the Whole. This council has the power to establish committees that it deems to be necessary.

A registrar that records the names and addresses of every member, licensee, and holder of a certificate of authorization is to be recorded and presented to the Minister of Justice on or before February 1 of each year.

The association of professional engineers and geoscientists is also required to file an annual report to the minister, as required.

This Bill not only repeals The Engineering Professions Act, but also makes consequential amendments to a number of pieces of current Saskatchewan legislation. Eleven other pieces of legislation will be amended following the passage of this Bill into law. The amendments of these Acts all deal with the definition of a professional engineer.

The definition of a professional engineer will now be regulated under The Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act, and no longer by The Engineering Act.

Mr. Speaker, I see this Bill as a non-controversial one. The changes to the regulation of professional engineers and geoscientists through this Bill are long overdue. The authority of the council and committees are clearly outlined in this Bill, as are the responsibilities of the association as a whole.

I do have some questions regarding some of the sections of the Bill, but I have no major concerns with the actual content or intent of this Bill. We have received positive feedback from a number of stakeholders in regard to this Bill and I feel quite

comfortable that this is a good piece of legislation that will have nothing but good effects for all professions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 55 — An Act to amend The Municipal Employees' Pension Act

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 1996.

Mr. Speaker, the municipal employees' pension plan provides pension benefits to municipal employees, school board employees, and designated police officers and fire-fighters. Over 700 employers and over 7,400 employees participate in the plan.

A nine-member commission oversees the plan's operations. The commission represents major employers and interest groups participating in the plan, such as the association of school business officials, the rural municipal administrators' association, and urban employees.

The primary impetus for this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is to change the plan to comply with the Income Tax Act of Canada. Participating employers of the municipal employees' pension plan currently match employee contributions to the plan on a monthly basis.

In a defined benefit pension plan, Revenue Canada does not allow employers to match employee contributions based on salary. It is therefore necessary to amend the plan to provide that employers will contribute amounts as determined by the commission. This amount, to be determined by the Municipal Employees' Pension Commission, will be based upon an actuarial valuation. The commission is dedicated to ensuring that the pension plan is funded at all times.

The municipal employees' pension plan currently refunds any member contributions exceeding the amount allowed in a given calendar year under the Income Tax Act of Canada, plus interest. Revenue Canada, however, prohibits the payment of interest on this refund amount and it is prudent to amend the plan to reflect this.

The pension paid to a member prior to age 65 is reduced at age 65. It is necessary to amend the plan to make it clear that members who take early retirement with a reduced pension will also have their allowance reduced at age 65. This amendment facilitates consistency of pension payments within the plan and complies with the Income Tax Act of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the plan currently allows members who retire with a terminal illness to receive the payment of their pension in the form of a term certain annuity. To comply with the income tax regulations of Canada it is necessary to amend this provision

such that members who are terminally ill at the time of their retirement will receive the commuted value of their pension. The same benefit will be provided to active members of the plan who terminate membership in the plan due to a terminal illness.

The pension plan currently provides a pension to those members who meet certain medical criteria. The disability allowance is payable to a member who is less than age 60 and has at least 15 years of continuous service. The member must be in receipt of a disability benefit under the Canada Pension Plan.

For compliance purposes, the Municipal Employees' Pension Commission recommends that the member must also be disabled within the meaning of the Income Tax Act of Canada to receive the disability allowance.

Adding this criteria to The Municipal Employees' Pension Act ensures that the plan complies with the federal legislation.

Mr. Speaker, upon termination of employment, the municipal employees' pension plan allows members two years to seek re-employment with a participating employer of the pension plan without affecting the member's service for the purpose of qualifying for a pension.

It is desirable to amend the plan such that non-vested members will receive a refund of their contributions, plus interest, immediately upon the expiration of this two-year period instead of after six months. This change will benefit the member by providing continued membership in the plan and will foster consistency in the pension plan's operations.

Mr. Speaker, where a member dies prior to the commencement of a pension and leaves no beneficiary, it is the desire of the pension plan to pay to the member's estate the commuted value of the pension as at the member's death, plus any other relevant amounts standing to the member's credit at the date of death. This method of payment reflects the value of the pension earned as at the date of death and is more representative of the amount that should be payable on the member's behalf. The current practice pays the amount standing to the member's credit and the contribution account multiplied by two.

It is also desirable to amend the legislation to remove those provisions that no longer apply to members in the plan. This facilitates the commission's desire for concise, complete, and accurate legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 1996.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This proposed legislation will significantly restructure The Municipal Employees' Pension Act. I understand that many of the changes are needed to make sure that the municipal employees' Act will comply with the revamped federal Income Tax Act.

One of the first amendments proposed in this Bill will allow people employed by one municipality who leave and become

employed by a different municipality to continue coverage under the municipal pension plan. The suggested changes in section 14 will give non-permanent members two years to find other employment with another employer in the plan instead of a just six-month period as in the current Act.

Another section in this legislation will change the formula municipalities use to determine how much they contribute to employees' pension plan. The amendments outlined in section 17 will move away from a strict dollar-for-dollar plan to a more sophisticated formula that is decided by an actuary.

While I am pleased to see that changes are being made to bring this Act into line with the federal Income Tax Act, a few of the amendments cause me some concern. There would be major changes to the financial contributions of the municipal employees' pension plan, and I would like a better idea of what kind of financial impact this will have on municipalities.

If a municipality is joining the plan, it will have to pay a lump sum. I have some concerns about how that amount of money will be calculated. Another problem I have with Bill 55 is the section dealing with the over-contributions employees make to the municipal pension plan. Under Bill 55, those people would not collect interest on the over-payment. If the employees will not get that interest, I'm wondering where the interest will end up.

The amendments contained in section 21 will see the commuted value of the employee's pension to be paid out if that employee dies, but I do not see any mechanism in place to ensure that this commuted value is fair.

I am pleased to see that this legislation will make changes in section 24 to adopt a federal definition of disability. I believe this is generous and fair.

Finally I do have concerns about the changes outlined for section 37. Municipalities would now have two years to pay out pension refunds, instead of one. I feel that a two-year wait may be too long for employees who are no longer working for municipalities.

Because all the amendments proposed in Bill 55 will have a significant financial impact on municipalities and their employees, I would like more time to consult with these stakeholders. And therefore I move this debate be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

(1500)

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 63

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. MacKinnon that **Bill No. 63 — An Act respecting the Saskatchewan Pension Annuity Fund** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we are discussing a new Act aimed at consolidating the provisions for underwriting annuities for pension plans under one Act. Upon passage of this Act, the fund, which currently has a budget of approximately \$13 million, will be invested by the board. This fund will provide annuities for members of the public employees superannuation plan.

Section 6(1) deals with the board's ability to establish specialty funds. I am having a difficult time understanding the need for this unless it is to enable the board to make riskier investments. As set forth, there do not seem to be legislated guidelines to regulate such uncertain ventures.

The Act also states that The Saskatchewan Insurance Act doesn't apply to this board. This would seem to have some far-reaching implications. That Act goes on to set out division of funds upon a marriage breakdown and establishment of appeal process if there is an objection to the division.

Upon examination of this Act, Mr. Speaker, I find the goals set forth unclear, and I do not see any real benefit. As a member of the official opposition it is my responsibility, along with my colleagues, to scrutinize this Bill, to provide reasonable criticism, and make suggested changes. It is my duty to challenge parts of this Bill that I find do not satisfy the Act's mandate. The stakeholders and interest groups that have had the opportunity to review the Act have also expressed some concerns, Mr. Speaker.

At this point I conclude my remarks and will discuss my concerns when we meet in committee.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 64

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. MacKinnon that **Bill No. 64 — An Act respecting Pensions for Public Employees** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this point we are discussing another Act dealing with the public employees' pension. This Bill appears to be just a revamping of the old supervisory board of the public employees' government contributory superannuation plan which exists under the previous legislation.

This board's job is to invest money from the fund in securities that have been authorized by The Pension Benefits Act, 1992. As I read the Bill there is no opportunity for a court challenge of the actions of the board. In addition to investing the money from the pension fund, the board will also administer the public employees' pension plan. This pool of money the board looks after called the public employees' pension fund is an accumulation of employees' and employers' contributions, money from the old fund, revenues earned from the investments of the fund, and certain other monies that are transferred into the fund, as set out in sections 15 and 16.

Mr. Speaker, as a member again of the official opposition, it is my job to challenge the members opposite to do their very best for the citizens of this province. It is my responsibility to challenge and give responsible criticisms. It is my job to scrutinize every piece of legislation and try and arrive at a suitable conclusion with the other members. To assist us in this, we have approached various interest groups to help us appraise the Act. I will bring their concerns before this body in the Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 65

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. MacKinnon that **Bill No. 65 — An Act to amend The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for the opportunity to discuss amending this Bill and its possible consequences. As I read the amendment, it outlines provisions allowing for the splitting of pension assets upon marriage breakdown as set forth in The Matrimonial Property Act. There is clarification as to how the pension assets are dealt with when a marriage breaks down after retirement.

Under the Act it reads, today's pension assets can only be split when the benefits become available. This amendment allows for the benefits to be divided, based upon the commuted value of the benefits accrued from the date of marriage and ending on the date of an order or agreement pertaining to the marriage breakdown. The amount of the division of the commuted value entitled to by the spouse will be transferred to a prescribed RRSP (registered retirement savings plan) subject to The Pension Benefits Act, 1992.

It is our job as members of the opposition caucus to scrutinize each and every change, to honestly evaluate the amendments, and suggest legitimate, concrete changes. To achieve this, our caucus again is in contact with stakeholders and people that will be directly affected by these changes. They have expressed some concern, however, and we will address these concerns when we discuss the Bill in Committee of the Whole.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 73

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mrs. Teichrob that **Bill No. 73—An Act to amend The Planning and Development Act, 1983** — be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad to have a few minutes today to discuss the proposed amendments to The Planning and Development Act, 1983. I have a few concerns

with this Bill and I would also like to raise a few issues before this Bill passes into Committee of the Whole.

The mandate of this Bill as I see it is to ensure that the province of Saskatchewan is able to maintain an environment for meaningful and effective land use which will continue to be of benefit to the people of this province.

As we have stated before, Mr. Speaker, the majority of the changes being proposed in this Bill are simply housekeeping. We have no concerns with these small changes. It is the larger and more significant impacts that will come out of the implementation of these changes that concern me somewhat.

Several stakeholders have contacted my office with some serious and very well-founded concerns. Mr. Speaker, The Planning and Development Act will have a significant impact on people across this province, not just on those in my constituency that I have been in contact with.

The true mandate behind the changes of this Bill are to give the NDP government more control over the lives of the people in this province . . . is to have more control over the lives of the people in this province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we do not agree with this type of government. We were elected to represent the people, not to control their lives. I believe that the power to make this decision should continue to be in the hands of the people of this great province.

The greatest concern that I have with this Bill is that it transfers even more power into the hands of the minister responsible for Municipal Government. The people of this province do not deserve to live by the heavy-handed regulations of this minister and her government.

This Bill allows the Minister for Municipal Government to make decisions without consulting the people that will be affected, and she will no longer have to publish her decisions in the *Gazette*. What does this minister feel needs to be hidden from the people of this province? Everyone has a right to access to the decisions that are made by ministers on a regular basis.

Another concern I have is with the issue of buffer strips and the sale of these strips by the minister with no consultation with the municipalities that will be affected by these sales. This is another example of this government making decisions and then telling the people involved, instead of going through the consultation process before the decisions are made.

I believe that members opposite have lost touch with the people of the province. They have forgotten that they have been elected to represent these people and not to unilaterally make decisions that will affect the lives of many people across the province.

I have some major concerns with the appeal process and with the restrictions placed on building permits by this government. How strict are the parameters going to be? If a person is halfway through construction of a building and then decides to

change the plan slightly, will these changes be caught in a bureaucratic web? This issue will need to be discussed in greater length in Committee of the Whole.

The people of this province need a government that will, through its legislation, create an atmosphere that will promote economic development and sustainable job creation. We want to see more construction and expansion of businesses. Mr. Speaker, the main concern, when it comes right down to it, is to ensure that the people of this province are not stifled by unnecessary levels of government and bureaucracy.

We have, as of late, had the opportunity to consult with stakeholders and get their input on the possible impacts that this Bill will have on the people of northern and rural Saskatchewan. A considerable number of concerns with this Bill have been brought to our attention and we, through this Assembly, will be bringing those concerns to the attention of members of this government. Thank you.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 3 — An Act respecting The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology

The Chair: — I will ask the minister to introduce his officials, please.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me today Lily Stonehouse, the assistant deputy minister in the department; and Melodie Olineck, who is the liaison with the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology.

Item 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to the members of your staff, Mr. Minister, welcome, and we look forward to a productive afternoon.

I note that in 1992, Mr. Minister, a committee was struck to review SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology). Might you be able to inform us as to who comprised that committee and the people that were on it and what kind of a report was put to you?

(1515)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, it took me a few moments to be briefed on it because I had not anticipated the question.

I believe that the review that the member is inquiring about is the one that was chaired by Mr. Green, Mr. Stan Green. His committee consisted, if memory serves, of about half a dozen people, and they inquired into a number of internal issues in SIAST, primarily internal issues.

This report was in due course delivered to the then minister,

who is the present Minister of Municipal Government — she was the minister of Education at the time — and she turned the report over to the board of SIAST. And I'm advised that the recommendations in that report were all, or for the most part, implemented.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. While you've indicated that most of the recommendations were implemented, and I trust that that is the reason why we're seeing the SIAST Act — as a result of those recommendations — are there any . . . would you say that there were any critical recommendations that probably would have changed philosophy or done something quite contrary to what has been suggested and are being implemented in this new SIAST Act?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The member will have noted that the changes that are being proposed in the Bill now before the Assembly are housekeeping in nature and don't reflect any big change in policy or anything like that. The committee report, however, dealt with a wide range of matters which did not require legislative change and therefore are not reflected in the Bill.

But the things that are here — the reference to the secretariat, the reference to the four institutes, and the other changes that are here — for the most part do come out of the Green report.

Mr. Krawetz: — The question then would be, is that the board of directors of SIAST, as far as their proposals to you in regarding the changes from The Institute Act to the SIAST Act, if we would go back to the committee that was in place for the review, would they generally be satisfied with the recommendations that are being put forth in this new Act?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, Mr. Chair, they would.

Mr. Krawetz: — Good. Thank you.

Under section 5(1)(h), there's reference to SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management corporation) and its relationship with SIAST. I was wondering if you could explain to the House as far as the . . . what role SPMC plays in building . . . that is, is it involved in actual capital? Is it involved only in terms of furniture, stationery supplies? What role does SPMC have in this?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, SPMC owns the buildings and the real estate that is occupied by SIAST. It is therefore the landlord from whom we rent the premises. SPMC also is involved in the tendering for major equipment.

Mr. Krawetz: — The ownership is of all four campuses, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The situation is that on each of the four campuses, if I can use that term, each of the four institutes, the major buildings are owned by SPMC. There are, I think in every case, some buildings, a building or buildings, that are leased from other owners. I want to just correct my earlier answer; I ought to have made that clear. But for the most part

SPMC is the owner of the real property.

Mr. Krawetz: — A final question around this section would be, what amount of money is transacted between SIAST and SPMC for the tendering and the rentals of property that SPMC would acquire? What amount of money is the total transaction between SIAST and SPMC?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The estimate for this current fiscal year, '96-97, is as follows: accommodation, 13.334 million. There will be mail charges, mail charges, of approximately 225,000. And there will be approximately a million dollars, approximately \$1 million in major equipment purchases.

Mr. Krawetz: — Good, thank you, Mr. Minister. If we might refer now to section 6(8) where we note that that section actually talks about the remuneration to board members. What is the make-up, in terms of number of people, on the SIAST board? Do those appointments change often? And what would be the remuneration that is paid to these people?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — There have been two recent resignations from the board, and our current complement at the board is 12. We are close to making new appointments. This has been a fairly stable board over the years of our government since the first appointments, but there are in the normal course people coming and going, resignations that happen. But it's quite a stable board and quite a hard-working board.

I should also address the question of remuneration. We don't have the information with us, but I think that the compensation for board members is about 150 or \$155 a day. Whatever it is generally for other boards, it is the same for the SIAST board. I believe that the Chair gets an extra remuneration, although I'm not certain of that. And what I will undertake to do is to provide that information to the member today if I can.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Still on the same section, I note that it indicates that board members may serve a maximum of two terms, and each term is not to exceed three years. Do you do a tendering or do you post the positions that will become available, not because of resignations, just because of the fact that the term has expired for a board member because they've served six years. What process do you undertake to get new appointments to the board?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — As I indicated to the member, we're in the course of appointing new members to the board. And the member will know that I have quite a latitude there as to the number of people on the board. I can, I think, go up to 20 under the legislation.

I don't intend to go that high but what we strive for is a number of things. We're interested in a regional representation so that all parts of the province will have a representative on the board. We are interested in appointing people who have an interest in the kinds of programs that SIAST delivers, and that's quite a wide-ranging program. But obviously we want people on there who are prepared to devote some time and energy to the project. We strive for an approximate gender balance and we insist upon aboriginal representation. These are some of the

criteria that we use.

We don't advertise. We do however make a number of inquiries. We ask for suggestions. We have a union representative on the board and a student representative on the board.

Mr. Krawetz: — You've answered one of my questions, which was whether there was a student present, and I hear you indicate that there is one.

Currently on the board that you've indicated that there are 12 people left, is there an aboriginal person sitting on the board at the moment?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Not at the moment . . . well there is actually. The person who is acting as the Chair is aboriginal. And we have another nominee that we will be appointing in due course. Joan Greyeyes has been a member of the board for some years now and she has resigned because of the pressures of her regular job. And we are about to appoint another.

(1530)

Mr. Krawetz: — I note that one of the changes that is suggested in the new Act is that the number of meetings will be decreased from 12 to 10. I trust that that is probably due to summer holidays. So my question would be, is that true?

And secondly, which I don't believe that you answered the question when I first asked it was, the payment to the board, is it made by the SIAST board of directors . . . sorry, is it made from the grant to SIAST? Who pays the board of directors? And tie that into, if you would, the summer break as far as the cost . . . how will business be done without the two summer meetings?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The reference to 10 regular meetings reflects the practice of the board in recent years. I would expect that in the next 12 months there will be more than 10 meetings because of the kinds of decisions that are going to have to be made at SIAST during that period. But as I say, this reference in clause (c) to 10 regular meetings reflects recent practice.

The members of the board are paid from the SIAST grant.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Chair, I can give more precise numbers on the honoraria that is paid to board members. I was correct that board members are paid \$155 per day and that the Chair is paid \$235 per day.

Mr. Krawetz: — In light of the fact that you've indicated that the number of meetings that can be held can exceed 10, I trust then that there isn't any situation that can arise in the summer months that cannot be dealt with. In other words the question would be then, is the meeting at the call of the Chair such that if there is an important issue that they will meet and will discuss it?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, the Chair could call a meeting whenever he wishes. It could be during the summer months.

There is also an executive committee that could make decisions to a certain level. So they have the capacity to function through the summer if need be.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I move that we report progress and move on to the next Bill.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Bill No. 4 — An Act to amend The University of Regina Act

The Chair: — The next item of business before the committee is item no. 2, Bill No. 4, An Act to amend The University of Saskatchewan Act, and I will ask the minister to introduce his officials, please.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, just for the record, it is The University of Regina Act, and . . . Yes. The University of Regina Amendment Act, 1996 actually; correct myself.

Mr. Chair, I have with me today Brij Mathur, who is the associate deputy minister in the department, and Arleen Schultz, who is the manager of the institutional support unit.

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to your staff, Mr. Minister.

When I look at section 6, which is the, I think, the large clause of the amendment, I note that it indicates of course an investment procedure.

And I guess my question, Mr. Minister, is the fact that the university has made probably what can be considered a poor investment in the past, regarding the \$2 million loss to Olympia and York's Exchange Tower project, and I'm wondering if this change in legislation . . . Would you say that this legislation has come about as a result of that poor investment?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, that's a natural question; I understand it. The answer is no, this is not related to that.

While I'm on my feet though, about that very question of the investment in Olympia and York, it was, at the time that the university put the money in there, considered to be an excellent investment. And their advice from their financial advisers was to that effect. And the rating of the company at the time of investment was of the highest order, the very highest order, and there was no suggestion around that the company may collapse in the way that it did. That's an interesting thing and I just want to put that on the record of this House because it's often referred to.

The changes that you see to section 6 have been requested by the University of Regina and parallel changes that we made to The University of Saskatchewan Act last session in this Assembly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I note that the

University of Saskatchewan did not invest in this particular good project. And I wonder if, when the University of Saskatchewan was controlled by some other regulations in relationship to the University of Regina . . .

That is the question that I was asking, whether or not we are removing some restrictive investment procedures from the U of R (University of Regina) that now will allow them to stay more in tune with the U of S (University of Saskatchewan), or was this still a decision made by the board of governors? And can it still be made in exactly the same fashion in terms of determining an investment, and then that investment may still go sour?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, the university could make the same decision now that they made then, in the same way. And the amendments that we're considering today don't touch upon that right. It's a natural thing to do, when an organization like a university has cash on hand that they're going to be holding for a while, to put it into an investment that will return a rate of interest. And they always . . . they're not speculative about it, they're not trying to make a big amount of money on it, but they're trying to find a safe investment to give them a fair return until they need the cash. And that's what they tried to do with the Olympia and York situation that blew up in their face.

But they could do that at the time they did it and they can do it now. It's a matter for them to decide, and these amendments don't affect that power.

Mr. Krawetz: — You referred to "they" making the decision, and I'd like to know who has the decision at the universities? Because this Act is bringing it into line with the University of Saskatchewan, so I guess we're talking about both universities. Who at that body has the decision as far as where the investment will be made, what degree of risk is involved, and whether or not a decision is made that only an investment of the particular risk will be actually adhered to.

And the other part of the question I guess will be, is, what amounts can be invested?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The authority lies with the board of governors. On a day-to-day basis the authority is delegated to the administration of the university, who will report on the matter to the board, and the mechanisms are in place for that to happen. But as far as the legalities are concerned, it is the board of governors that have the statutory authority and anything that is done is done under their authority.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. In the case of the bad investment in '91 that you're suggesting that no one really knew about, how does a university go about trying to make up that shortfall? Will they be passing it off as a tuition fee increase to students; will it be government who will then supplement that loss?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The deficit at the University of Regina is of some considerable years standing. And they had a debt retirement program in effect at the time of the loss that the member refers to, and they were making progress with respect to the retirement of the debt when they had this further reverse.

As to where they find the money to implement a debt retirement plan, the answer is within the four corners of their budget. We do not provide them with any additional funding in recognition of the debt situation in which they find themselves.

And I made that very clear, that we're not going to move in to cover that for them. They're going to have to find that within their own resources; within the four corners of their own budget.

The budgetary situation is complex, naturally. The collective agreement operates and they live in the real world. They buy their goods as you and I do, and we know that costs continue to rise. So, you know, it's a challenge to them. And included in that challenge is to dedicate an amount to the retirement of this indebtedness.

Now as to where the revenue comes from. We provide our grant. They do charge a tuition. They are charging course costs this year at the University of Regina. And they have other minor funding sources in addition to that. But all of that gives them a budgetary situation in which they have implemented a debt retirement plan.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, is there a maximum amount of investment that the university can make outside the borders of the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — There are no limitations of which I'm aware. There's certainly none in this legislation.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. A final couple of questions. When you talk about investments and the university making these investments, of course they're hoping to glean interest from them. And you talked previously about a debt reduction plan that was in place.

I'm wondering if any thought has been given to have the university, I guess not necessarily controlled but influenced, such that a debt reduction plan be implemented and that investments that are going really, really well, suddenly that isn't a windfall of interest that is put towards creating, you know, new programs. Like I think, should there be a plan in place that puts this against debt, or at least a certain amount of it?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We are not inclined to consider that because of the autonomous nature of the universities, and we look to them to deal with this problem in a prudent way. And we are confident, knowing the administration of the university as we do, that they will handle this in a responsible and prudent manner.

And no doubt they are doing something along the line that the member refers to. But we, as a matter of long-standing tradition, just simply don't interfere with their administration to that extent.

Mr. Krawetz: — Final question, Mr. Minister. You mentioned the board of governors being actually the body that is responsible for making the decisions, making the investments, handling the debt, etc. What is the size of the board of

governors for the U of R?

(1545)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — There are 12 members of the board of governors, six of which are appointed by the government. At the moment there are 10 people serving on the board; there are two vacancies. I might say to the member again that we are on the verge or on the eve of filling those vacancies.

Mr. Krawetz: — Supplementary . . . (inaudible) . . . small question then would be, is, as a body of 10, in terms of making decisions — and I know we're talking about a review taking place over the course of the next short while — is that going to have any effect, the fact that there isn't 12 bodies there? And are the two that are missing, are they appointees or are they people that will be elected?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The two vacancies are government appointees, and again we will be appointing them. The criteria for appointment roughly parallel the ones that . . . the criteria that I mentioned in connection with SIAST.

But those vacancies will be filled before the board gets into any of the questions that have been the subject of public comment in the last few weeks.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In light of the fact that this — as we see it and as you've indicated — this amendment brings in line the U of R with The University of Saskatchewan Act and they parallel one another quite nicely, I would think that that would be sufficient in terms of questions.

And I would again appreciate the fact that the staff has been helpful. Thank you.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'd like to thank my officials for coming today to assist the committee with its work.

Bill No. 5—An Act to amend The Education Act

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To my immediate right is Craig Dotson, deputy minister of the Department of Education; to my left is Michael Littlewood. One of his duties is to deal with third-party funding and legislative services.

Clause 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to the two gentlemen, Mr. Dotson and Mr. Littlewood. I appreciate your contributions to this afternoon.

My first question I guess, because the Act covers many different areas, I think I'd like to look at some of the questions

around some of the more, shall we say, less controversial items. And I'd like to begin with the amendment to the Saskatchewan Book Bureau fund, subsection 10.4, clause no. 4.

When you're suggesting a name change, obviously that's more in tune with — as I've indicated in this House — that's more in tune with what really is happening with the bureau.

Could you give us an idea of what the time frame would be as far as implementation of this name — changing all the things that circulate around the province, and indeed, what might the cost be to the department to have this done?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — First of all, the Book Bureau operates on a revolving fund; it does not get an administrative budget from the department. So it generates its own fees.

All existing supplies with the name Book Bureau will be used up before we change the title. I'm advised by the officials that we anticipate, because of computer changes, that there will be a one-time cost of about a thousand dollars.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'm glad to hear that, you know, supplies are going to be used up, in terms of cost.

If there are additional costs, will there be additional charges within that revolving fund since there is no additional financing or funding from government?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We don't anticipate that the name change is going to create any difference. It's such a minor adjustment in terms of the overall scheme of things at the Book Bureau. So we're not anticipating any huge increases in terms of fees as a result of the name change.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you. We could refer now to clauses 5, 6, and 7, because I think they're all connected in that those clauses deal with the school boards' and the conseils scolaires' ability to do certain things with funds.

As the Act sits, or as it is stated right now, what kinds of functions were boards, or I can say scolaires, not allowed to do?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised that there was a school board in the province that wanted to make a direct deposit electronically in terms of paying utility bills and the Act didn't give them the authority to do that.

As well, when our officials took a look at the Act, there was no authority for making direct deposit of payroll and those kinds of things. So this is a request coming from school boards as a result of their inability to legally engage in some functions because the Act is limited.

Mr. Krawetz: — Then, Madam Minister, boards of education who have been doing electronic payroll to teachers, has this . . . not legal according to the Act?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised that the Act does not cover that provision.

Mr. Krawetz: — Then I'm very, very pleased to see this happening. My other question then would be, if we're expanding this to now include utilities — you mentioned utility companies — and if we're expanding it to include payroll and the teachers and non-professional staff as well, what about the vendors, the people that are owed money on a regular basis — a gas company or book company — are these going to be included in this as well?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised that the new restrictions . . . or the new provisions are not restrictive. I'm advised the new provisions are not restrictive, that school boards will be allowed to pay out automatically any ongoing vendors or businesses that they have regular contracts with.

Mr. Krawetz: — So if there was an agreement set up between the board of education and the vendors, banking institution, they will be able to pay. And an affirmative nod suggests that that is correct. Okay.

I noticed in the three clauses it indicates chartered bank or credit union. Is there any reference to trust company or does trust company not fit into those two categories?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'm advised that it does not cover trust companies. We've retained the current language in the Act when we refer to chartered banks and credit unions.

Mr. Krawetz: — That is the current language. Pardon my lack of knowledge here. Is trust company included in that?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I indicated that it was not.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, section 146 of the current Education Act is the section that deals with, of course, release of records. And under section 8 of this amendment, we're proposing to completely repeal section 146. And I know that you've indicated in explanatory notes that section 146 is a more restrictive section as far as dealing with release of records than what is currently being followed by other local authorities.

Could you indicate how we're going to move in the direction of actually now using an Act outside of The Education Act to control student records?

(1600)

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act is now the statute of authority when it comes to information. And The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act applies to health, municipal government, and education. We have concluded that it's best to follow one statute rather than having two statutes that may be confusing. So as a result of The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act applying to health and municipal government, it now applies to education as well.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I think that's a wise choice because people need to understand one rule and be

familiar with it, whether we're talking health. My question then will be, as is indicated, I believe, under clause 13 you are actually suggesting that section 8 will not come into force on assent but actually on proclamation. And I wonder what kind of a mechanism is being put in place so that the schools, the principals, the teachers, the school boards, etc., will know about the privacy Act and be assured that they understand that Act completely before we say, okay, we're not dealing with the section 146 anymore?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — This Act was passed a couple of years ago. Since that time, the Department of Education and Justice have held orientation meetings with school trustees and SASBO (Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials) members in terms of the legislation, what's in the legislation, and the appropriate forms.

We have been working with our partners in education regarding The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act in the last couple of years. We believe that we require more time to work with the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) and trustees and SASBO, secretary-treasurers, and directors of education, to ensure that they know what the differences are with the new Act. And we anticipate that we . . . this will come into force in the new school year, meaning the fall of 1996.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Madam Minister. As I've indicated, those are probably the three sections that I see as being the least controversial of the Bill, and I have further questions on the other parts of the Bill but my colleague from Rosthern has a few questions.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Madam Minister, continuing with some of the questions dealing with student records, regarding the removal of requirement of parental attendance for students to view their records, I understand some of the validity behind that, but I'm somewhat confused as to why you deleted the entire clause. It seems to do away with any kind of confidentiality with student records. Why was that done?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The other statute, The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, clearly protects education information, so students are protected, if you were to take a look at that statute.

So as I said earlier to the Liberal critic, this is about having one authority and not having the privacy Act, and The Education Act, which may be confusing to the public. So we're going with the local authority Act and we believe that students will still be protected.

Mr. Heppner: — If we put the responsibility for student records . . . taken them away from Education, what link does Education still have to make sure that any changes that might be made from that avenue on record confidentiality that you still have an input into that?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — There are several different local authorities. As I said earlier, there are health authorities, municipal authorities, and education authorities. And I would

anticipate that if there were to be changes to The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, that obviously our various partners that are guided by that Act would have to be consulted.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Explanatory notes for that section say that the amendment is intended to facilitate integrated service delivery which involves the sharing of information among human service providers. Now I think that aspect is obviously very needed with the fact that schools have so many more organizations that are playing a part in that. On the other hand, it tends to sound just a little on the ominous side because this information is going to a wider scope.

What ability is given to either the students or their parents to monitor, control, or correct personal information that's distributed to other government departments?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What's important here is that people have access to their own files. As an individual you could have access to your own file. If there's incorrect information, you would have the duty to correct that information.

As well, I'm advised that records are not going to be distributed widely; that the sharing of information is done in the context of being supportive to the individual for whom the information is being shared.

And as you know, there are times in schools when a student will come into a school and into a classroom and the principal and the appropriate teacher will not have the appropriate information in order to ensure that there is an appropriate education plan for that young person. And this is to facilitate the whole notion of integrated services, where we not only have Health, Social Services, Education, and Justice involved, but it's to ensure that there is an appropriate sharing of information to support and enhance that young person's chances for success in school.

Mr. Heppner: — Could you explain, if we're going to work through the integration of those very services that you mention, what the procedure would be for a school to get information, let's say from Justice or any one of the other four or five organizations that you mentioned.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We have an interdepartmental committee that has been dealing with this information . . . or with this situation of sharing information that is appropriate to enhance the young person's chance for success. And we anticipate that there will be a protocol arrangement that will be shared with the appropriate agencies to ensure that we protect the information regarding the young person, but that we ensure that the information that is shared will enhance the well-being of that young person.

Mr. Heppner: — Moving on to changes to section 198(9), allowing replacement teachers the right of first refusal to replace an absent teacher. First question is . . . or two questions, I guess on that. Why was it introduced, and where did the direction come from to produce that change?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — This provision has come about as a result of a need to clarify circumstances that boards of education can hire teachers other than teachers that are hired on permanent contract. I think it's fair to say in the two and a half years that I've been Minister of Education, there have been many concerns expressed by all of the partners in education about the lack of clarity with regard to the hiring of teachers other than permanent teachers on contract.

You may know that all of this culminated in a court case and there was a desire on the part of the school trustees, the teachers, the directors of education, to clarify the situation.

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — Mr. Chairman, I move that we rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

(1615)

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 4 — An Act to amend The University of Regina Act

Hon. Mr. Anguish: — I move that the Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

The committee reported progress on Bill No. 3 and Bill No. 5.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Energy and Mines Vote 23

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to introduce his officials, please.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to introduce my deputy, Ray Clayton, to my right; as well Bruce Wilson to my left, the executive director for petroleum and natural gas. Behind me is Donald Koop, the assistant deputy minister of finance and administration. And in the rear, George Patterson and Malcolm Wilson — Malcolm is the director of energy development branch, and George is the executive director of exploration and geological services.

Item 1

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Minister. I would like to take this opportunity as well to welcome your officials and hope that we can have a very pleasant, enjoyable process of scrutiny of your department and all the fine work that your officials are initiating.

Mr. Minister, first of all when I start, what I would like to do is give you an opportunity to please give us a brief overview of how you see the priorities of your department and an overview of how you see the whole thing operating in this next fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much to the member from Melfort-Tisdale.

Mr. Chairman, I guess the Department of Energy and Mines is an arm of government that I guess is viewed and should be viewed rightly so as an economic development arm of government. They're responsible for regulating and facilitating the development of our energy sector. Specifically oil, natural gas, all of the different mining operations that go on in the province are under the purview of this department.

I would like to just say a few words about the department and what I hope that we can achieve as a government working with this arm of executive government in the next year. But in order to do that, I would want to say just a few words of the perspective that industry has shared with me, their perspective of the department.

It's a well-established arm of government. Energy and Mines has been I guess for the most part, one of the most stable departments within government. The officials that work within the department, many of them have been with government through different political parties — Liberal, New Democrat, and Conservative.

And it's a department that industry tells me that they're very comfortable in dealing with in that, one, they have access. It's not a cumbersome administration; it's fairly streamlined. They are listening to industry when industry brings a concern to them, and that's a relationship that I hope, as minister in charge of Energy and Mines, to continue in the next year.

Of course market conditions have a great impact on how much activity we see in the oil and gas sector, the potash sector — which is a very major player in terms of our development — and the uranium sector. We've got some new opportunities coming on stream with respect to gold and other initiatives the department is working with.

And so I guess what we certainly would want to and hope to achieve next year is a good revenue flow for the Consolidated Fund, which means we have to have a good, positive working relationship with all of the sectors that I've mentioned. So I guess that's really what we would hope to achieve.

I want to see some stability within the department, and I think we've had that and I think we've got that. We've got some very competent and capable people working for the department. And I don't say that just because they're here; I say that because that's what industry tells me their perception is. And from my perspective that's very important.

The other aspect of it is, I guess, is working with the other arms of government, the Department of Environment. Quite clearly the impact on the environment with some of the expansion and some of the development is a concern both to the department and to the department of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management), the environment arm of our government, in that we know if we're going to have good, positive working relationship with the people of Saskatchewan whose resources we are developing, that they're also concerned

that we protect the air and the ground and the area that means so much to all of in Saskatchewan. So I guess working with the other departments is another element of what we hope to achieve.

I think I pretty much condensed where we hope to head in the next year. And I think I would want to say that the bottom line though has got to be that the department has to work in partnership with the people of Saskatchewan, the shareholders of our resources, and with industry who we invite to the province to develop on our behalf and create job opportunities for Saskatchewan people.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the Speaker's gallery I'd like to introduce to you Kathy Somers. She's a student from Thom Collegiate here in Regina. She's come to the legislature to discuss the duties and responsibilities of an MLA, and this is her very first time in the building. So welcome, Kathy.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Energy and Mines Vote 23

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Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, I really appreciate that overview of the department. And I also appreciate particularly the stability that you indicate is within that department. And I think that governments, past and present, should be commended for the fact that that is true. But I think more so, as you rightly indicated, it has more to do with the quality of officials and the efficient running of the department, to make sure that stability is indeed intact. So I certainly join you in commending the people in your department and the officials that are leading to that stability.

Minister, I think one of the things that's becoming increasingly obvious to all of us and certainly to people in your department, that mining and . . . particularly the mining industry is becoming an increasingly important component of the Saskatchewan economy that has largely in the past been based, or seemingly based on agriculture. And while that continues to be a very important segment of our economy, mining and the whole mining industry is something that's had an increasing impact on our economy.

I wonder if you would mind indicating how you see the role of the department, and certainly the mining industry in particular, leading into the 21st century and its impact on the provincial economy.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Chairman, and to the

member from Melfort-Tisdale, as I've indicated, much of the expansion is market driven. And there are some global pressures that come to play in terms of mining. Investors . . . it's becoming a much smaller world. Trade barriers have been relaxing over the number of years. Investment opportunities have been opening up not only in Saskatchewan, but in all of the world. And I guess what investors are looking for is a stable climate, a stable place in which to invest the hundreds of millions of dollars that go into the mining sector.

One of the initiatives that I as the minister have been working on is at a federal-provincial level. Working with our federal counterparts, the other Energy ministers from across Canada have been working to try and create an environment where we can attract some of this global investment.

Quite clearly, in Saskatchewan we have the richest uranium deposits in the world. We have a massive abundance of potash. We've got opportunities in gold, other precious metals, other minerals. The deposits are here. And what we need to do is to create an economic environment where that investment can take place.

As I've indicated, we've been working with our federal counterparts, and one of the initiatives that we've been attempting to broach with both the Minister of Natural Resources and the former minister of Environment, the Deputy Prime Minister, is to try and reduce the duplication of red tape that is required, reduce the process to a reasonable process where environmental concerns can be addressed but that they can be done at a cost that isn't prohibitive to investment in Canada and in Saskatchewan.

And I think the other thing that we've been doing as a provincial government is creating an economic climate with some stability. We've been working since our election in 1991 diligently with the people of Saskatchewan, with the business community, to put our financial house in order.

And I think that's one of the key things that investors are looking for, because with growing deficits and growing debt load on the province, that can only mean a couple of things, and that's cut-backs to services or increase taxes. And so what we want to do is have a royalty regime that will foster development in Saskatchewan. We want to have a tax regime, corporate and private taxes, that are reasonable and comparable to other areas.

So in order to achieve that, what we needed to do was put our financial house in order. And quite clearly I think the fact that we've been able to balance successive budgets and are forecasting balanced budgets to the year 2000 under the leadership of this Premier, that we're creating that environment.

I think that the markets will show that potash is going to do well and create revenue flow for the people of Saskatchewan. We've got some soft markets with respect to natural gas right now, but that does benefit other sectors of the economy. The oil prices seem to be fairly strong. Uranium prices are up.

So if I look at the whole piece, the players within our energy sector, within the oil and gas, and within the mining sector, I

think we have some good opportunities to do some good things both for the investors and for the people of Saskatchewan whose resource we're harvesting.

(1630)

I would want to say that I think we've done very well in the past. If you look at the . . . I guess the confidence in the province of Saskatchewan that the oil and gas sector has shown by their investment, by land sales, it's quite clear that we've been able to foster a good partnership with that part of the industry.

Potash, we're looking at some, hopefully in the future, some expansion on production and maybe some expansion in capacity. And we're in constant contact with the Saskatchewan Mining Association and their members. And so I think that we can expect good things to continue in potash.

The uranium industry, as you will know, is a global market for us. We're the major players in the world in terms of the resource. And we will continue to work with those industries to foster development in job opportunities for Saskatchewan people.

I think though the bottom line in terms of advancement and development of those resources has to be, and should be, and should continue to be what we've already built, and that is a good working relationship with industry. So I think if I'm to forecast what we can expect for next year, I think we're going to see a reasonable revenue flow. Those numbers have been put forth in our budget and I think you will recognize that we've always been reasonably conservative when we're estimating that revenue flow.

So I think the people of Saskatchewan can look forward to a good return on their resource. Hopefully we can foster some investment in some other areas that are not yet developed. And I think overall this holds a very bright future for us.

And as you've indicated, Saskatchewan has become more than agriculture; it's become more than forestry. We have a very diverse economy and we are working with industry and the people of Saskatchewan to take advantage of the benefits that we can reap from those resources.

Mr. Langford: — I'd like to ask leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Langford: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce a couple of constituents of mine, a long-time supporter of the New Democratic Party, Ray Funk, and his wife, Shirley Folstead. Welcome.

I'd like everyone in the Assembly to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Energy and Mines
Vote 23**

Item 1

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I certainly want to commend you on your comments and it certainly leads in a great number of directions that potentially there will be questions.

And I note in particular, items like impact studies and things like that that need to be done when new mines and development occurs. The whole field of the potential and the impact of the oil and gas industry. The question and the impact of the royalty structures in a great number of areas. The whole question of markets and how they're developing and where our potential opportunities are that way. The whole issue about investment in the mining industry and what potential your department may be doing in order to encourage that.

I note with interest your comments on trade barriers and the fact that free trade and the international economy is changing. So those are not necessarily the great evil things that very often I've heard your government say that were there in the past, but you're now regarding as opportunities, and I think that that is right on.

And then certainly when you also mention the fact that individual industries like the potash industry, the uranium industry, the gold industry . . . and I hope, Mr. Minister, because I hear in the Fort à la Corne area which is very near to my constituency, that the diamond industry may indeed become something that is viable in Saskatchewan. I know many people in our neck of the woods would be very hopeful that Debeers would move from South Africa to my constituency. We'd be very pleased with that.

And I also suspect that all of us would be delighted because we'd be able to buy those diamond baubles for our significant others at a much greater impact to the provincial economy, and that would be better.

But, Mr. Minister, what I'd like to do now is to, if I may, move a little more specific in terms of your department and the operation of your department. I notice in the figures that I have that in the *Estimates* for 1996-97 there is 234.4 full-time equivalents. Would you have the information going back to say, '91-92 as to what the full-time equivalents are and how they've changed over the past number of years in your department?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay, to the member opposite. We only have last year's figures and this year's figures which we'll send across to you, but I will undertake to get the number of full-time equivalents from 1991 to the forecast for this year. I would want to indicate to you that you will see a reduction this year from last year in terms of the numbers. And I might as well share with you that that was temporary employees that were put in place to take care of the backlog of paperwork that was incurred by the massive amount of investment done by the oil

and gas industry.

As you will know, when people purchase land it creates paper flow; paper flow creates jobs. So I guess that's just an indication of the importance of this department in terms of job creation and how important it is to have the investment from industry in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. I also would ask when you're doing that, would you mind breaking down your in-scope and out-of-scope breakdown in those full-time equivalents so that we may be able to have a look at how those shifts have been happening.

I think the other area that I want to then move into in more specifics is the whole question of the Saskatchewan Energy Conservation and Development Authority. In the past, I believe, last year, it cost something in the order of a million and a half dollars since it was instituted, and this year is being dismantled.

How is the function of this authority going to be absorbed into your department? Or can you explain to us please, perhaps even going back a bit, the rationale for establishing it in the first place? And then, secondly, how whatever useful functions there were within that authority are now going to be covered within other aspects of your department or government?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well let me begin by describing the initial mandate. SECDA (Saskatchewan Energy Conservation and Development Authority) was established shortly after our election. We were attempting to put together an energy strategy for the province that will take us into the next century. And it was the desire of government to explore different options in terms of what would make sense for us in Saskatchewan, what kind of energy we should be developing.

As you will know, the vast majority of the electrical energy in our province is either hydro . . . the vast majority of it though is with low-grade lignite coal. And of course we do some natural gas fuel . . . we use natural gas to fuel some of the generating stations. And the government wanted to explore different alternatives to see what would make sense for us in Saskatchewan and have some recommendations come from an independent body, which SECDA was, and share those with the people of Saskatchewan and with government. That part of their mandate was completed.

And the other portion of their mandate was to look at energy conservation initiatives which will now become the responsibility of the Saskatchewan Research Council, working with Energy and Mines and with our utility corporations.

I would want to say that I know, to the member, that there are those who would have rather seen SECDA continue. There was a feeling by some members of the general public that the initiatives that they were dealing with with respect to energy conservation were very positive. And I want to say to you and to the people of Saskatchewan that I agree with that.

One of the initiatives that they put together, working with the

former minister, the member from Battlefords, was the ice rink energy audit program, a great program. It saved thousands of dollars for many Saskatchewan communities. And I want to say that that will be a program that will be continued.

We believe that there's an opportunity to save the people of Saskatchewan money, continue those initiatives. We've encompassed the energy alternative study done by SECDA into our Saskatchewan energy strategy which I tabled, I believe, last March in the legislature. And it was very good work done by SECDA, and we appreciate all of the work that the employees in SECDA have done.

But I want to say that as we put together our budget, Energy and Mines was charged with, as other government departments were, the responsibility to find areas of administrative savings where we may be able to achieve those savings but still maintain the positive work that government departments are charged with doing.

The decision was made that we could continue the energy conservation initiatives, some of them at the Saskatchewan Research Council, that the mandate with respect to energy options had been fulfilled. And subsequent to those discussions, SECDA is in the process of being wound down.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, can you share with me, please, how many employees were involved with SECDA?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I'm told by my officials that there were two contract employees, but there were 18 employees of SECDA.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. If you indicated to me earlier that the six full-time equivalents that your department reduced were temporary people that were dealing with the extra paper burden because of the oil and gas industry. So if you really exclude them, then there was no reduction of full-time equivalents in your department. What happened to the 18 SECDA people? Where are they accounted for?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, and to the member, we're in the process of negotiating a severance with the 18 full-time employees at SECDA. We're looking at the possibility of some opportunities within the Saskatchewan Research Council for some of those employed right now at SECDA.

And that process is not yet complete, but we would expect that after discussions have been completed with the employees at SECDA, we can better give you an idea of how many may in fact have opportunities in other arms or in other branches of government.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Would it be correct in assuming then that these 18 employees are then part of the current numbers: 234.4 Energy and Mines employees? I'm asking where are those 18 accounted for.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm told by my officials that because they're not part of executive government, they don't show up in the number of employees and full-time equivalents

within the Department of Energy and Mines. Those are separate and apart from Energy and Mines.

If I could, Mr. Chairman, I just want to offer my greetings to Ray Funk and his wife Shirley. I'm glad to see them here. I know Shirley has some special interest in the oil and gas business, having spent a number of years working in the industry, and so I'm hoping she will find today's deliberations entertaining.

(1645)

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In dealing with the negotiations for severance and those type of things with the SECDA employees, the potential cost of those severance packages . . . and there was newspaper article on April 2 that quoted . . . and heaven forbid that we necessarily take newspaper articles at face value. But it was suggested that as much as a half a million dollars in severance may be on the table in these negotiations.

Where in your line items would these type of settlements be included?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, that will be a charge that will be levied against the previous fiscal year because that's when the decision was made. And if there was a shortfall, an appropriation, it would be dealt with in the appropriate fashion.

I want to say to the member that we looked long and hard at this whole budget, and some of these decisions were not easy decisions. We have some external pressures on government this year that had to be dealt with if we were to maintain services.

So some of these decisions, as I said, you know, I'm sure that you will agree that we would rather not have seen. But I think in the best interests of the province as a whole, some of the tough decisions have been made.

And so I would say we know that there will be some wind-down costs associated with SECDA. But we feel that the employees have to be and should be treated fairly, and that's what we intend to do.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Chair, I ask leave of the Assembly to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to introduce a former MP (member of parliament) of mine who is visiting the legislature today as well. I'd like to introduce Ray Funk as well as his wife, Shirley Falstead.

And I'd like to ask the Assembly to please welcome these two fine people.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Energy and Mines
Vote 23**

Item 1

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Minister, I realize that we're in very difficult financial times and that difficult choices need to be made, but I really question the logic of the decision that you've made in regard to SECDA. It strikes me that here was a body that was functioning very pro-actively, very much looking into the future, looking into the needs of consumers very often, rather than producers of energy. And I know that seems sometimes to be a contradiction, but I think with the increasing costs of energy in all aspects that that was a very important component.

I'm at a bit of a loss. Where you had a body that you're giving a grant of a million and a half dollars to and were doing all these things, I fail to see where you're going to make savings. Because surely if these 18 people, in the functions that this authority was doing within its own realm was occurring and was a great value . . . How in the world is the Saskatchewan Research Council going to pick this kind of load up without cutting some other programs that were very important? And you might be pipe dreaming when you think that you can just sort of say to us that Sask Research Council is going to pick this thing up.

How much are the grants going to up to the Saskatchewan Research Council in order to take over the functions of SECDA?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Chairman, as I've said before, there were some difficult decisions made in this budget. And the member may not agree with the direction that we took with respect to cost saving in some areas. And that's his privilege, and that's his prerogative.

I would want to say that I didn't agree with the moves that his federal counterparts made, the Liberal Party in Ottawa made, in terms of cutting back in health, education, and social services, to this province of \$106 million. I thought that was prioritized wrong. I thought there were other areas — and I still do think that — there were other areas in that budget that could have been cut without impacting as dramatically on the people of Canada and the people of Saskatchewan and destroying potentially our social network. And that's my prerogative to disagree with the decisions that they make, as yours is to disagree with the changes that we made with respect to SECDA.

But I want to say to you that this government is no less committed to energy efficiency and energy conservation. And you will understand and you will know, I'm sure, that there are initiatives that are taking place within our Crown utilities, within SaskPower and SaskEnergy, that the Department of Energy and Mines is working closely with industry, that industry, by the way, is doing an awful lot in terms of energy

conservation on their own. And I don't think necessarily that it needs to be government that invests the money with respect to energy conservation initiatives that can be and should be done by private industry. I think that's a responsibility of theirs.

Is it a responsibility of this government to facilitate energy conservation? The answer is, absolutely. And we've signed on to the agreement, the international agreement, with respect to carbon dioxide emissions and reduction as a government, and you will know that. So we've made a commitment.

Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation has an energy conservation initiative to deal with government-owned buildings. And what we will attempt to do, and this will manifest itself in the coming weeks and months, is coordinate and develop a streamlined administration for the energy conservation initiatives that take place in this province.

I want to say to you that the Saskatchewan Research Council has been around this province for a long, long time. It has developed a reputation with industry and with the general public for facilitating, at a cost-recovery basis, on a cost-recovery basis, very positive initiatives that help us not only with respect to economic development but help us with respect to protecting our environment.

And so I don't want the member to feel, because we've made some administrative changes and because we're reshaping the look of government in attempting to decrease the amount of administrative costs, that we in any way are neglecting our environmental responsibilities, because that just isn't so.

What we are charged with and why we received a second mandate is because the people of Saskatchewan saw us to be a very pragmatic and efficient government with respect to how we're spending their dollars. And I say to the member, if we can achieve our goals, that being a safe environment in this province, with a lesser expenditure, then that's what we intend to do. I don't believe — and I hope the member doesn't believe — that just because you throw money at an initiative it's going to create a result that can be done for fewer dollars. We've seen that in this province. I don't think we want to return to that.

I can use an example of agriculture. We still spend \$400 per capita on agriculture in this province. And I think that's a responsible expenditure. But what we are attempting to do with the farming community is to work with them to make them less reliant on government and develop programs where they can enjoy a good bottom line with fewer government dollars being expended.

And I don't think that that should be isolated to any sector of government expenditure. We have a responsibility, both you and I, to ensure that we are delivering services at the least possible cost. You may disagree with how we do it. And I have no quarrel with that, and I think it's positive that we debate your ideas, your thoughts, and my thoughts, because that's how I think we can deliver a better government, so I appreciate your input.

But I want to say that I believe we can achieve the goals that we

have set out, that being energy conservation initiatives, and we can do it with less expenditures than was previously the case. So I close my comments just by saying that, don't feel that we're neglecting our responsibility as a government to ensure positive energy conservation initiatives because that's not the case.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I was not implying that you're not being committed to energy conservation. But I simply am questioning the choices that you're making. Here you had an agency that operated with a fair bit of autonomy, who had the interests of consumers largely at heart, who was looking at the authority that provided technical, economic, and marketing services; that looked at alternatives in terms of energy sources and research and development of new technology.

And now you're telling me that you can just dismantle this. And while I'm not questioning the responsibility and the role of the Saskatchewan Research Council, I'm saying when you unload all those projects on the Saskatchewan Research Council, something else has to fall out of the other end or, Mr. Minister, you're going to have to provide some money.

If you're going to have SaskPower do this, you're going to have to provide extra money and funding in the SaskPower bureaucracy. If you have SaskEnergy do it, you're going to have to have that bureaucracy picking up the slack.

And the question that I'm putting to you, Mr. Minister, is that if you think that you're simply unloading something and that there is just pure \$1.5 million of economic saving, then you're kidding yourself. It's not necessarily throwing money at things that creates solutions, but spending money smartly in the interests of the people of this province is good economic investment in this province. And I think you've missed the boat by a mile on this one. And I know that many people in this province are very disappointed with this, among other choices your government has made.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I'm just going to respond briefly to the member. I can see that we probably won't find common ground. But just let me say that with respect to energy options, as I've indicated previously I think, SECDA did a great job in terms of informing government and putting together information that we encompassed into our energy strategy, the *Saskatchewan Energy Strategy*. So that part of their mandate is complete.

With respect to energy conservation, you may be right, and it may be that we will not be able to do all of what we could have or maybe wanted to achieve with SECDA. But I say to the member that we will do as best we can with what resources we're left, after a federal offload of \$106 million, to ensure energy conservation in the province.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.

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